



LUTHER SNOW

ASSETS FOR THE GOOD IN GROUPS

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Dear Subscriber,

Today's *Ask the Good Groups Guru* column addresses the issue of money in voluntary groups, and what to do about it.

The questioner's particular context is rural economic development, so we're sharing links to a [free download](#) for rural communities and the section in our website on [Positive Rural Development](#).

We've added a new [Glossary](#) entry and "[Lutherism](#)," and we continue to invite you to [exchange links](#) with us. Sign up for the newsletter to continue receiving it. Enjoy!

Luther
contact me at info@luthersnow.com

What to Do Without Money?

Ask the Good Groups Guru

Dear Good Groups Guru

I joined the Board of an economic development organization in our rural community. I don't expect we're going to attract a lot of big companies to our community anytime soon. So I'd like to propose we develop a business incubator. But that will cost millions and involve a lot of grantwriting and such. I don't know how the others on the Board will feel about that. How should I approach this, and how can I convince the rest of the Board?

Want to Do Something!

The Good Groups Guru suggests:

- *Use what you've got, to get what you want"*
- *Have a party!*
- *Incubator without walls*
- *Watch, listen, and grow*

Dear Doing Something

First, thank you for your service to your community. You are already doing something!

Now, what if I told you it's lucky you don't have money? Seriously, money can divide groups in some strange ways. But there's a lot you can accomplish before even starting to think about major fundraising. In fact, one thing we know in rural community is how to "use what we've got, to get what we want."

It's a great idea to "incubate" new businesses (also a rural concept - see the [Glossary](#)) to create jobs and strengthen the economy. But you don't have to start from scratch. Look around and you'll see, there are already a lot of entrepreneurs running businesses that are unnoticed or taken for granted. Don't forget your "lone eagles," online enterprises, home-based businesses, and other entrepreneurs selling services and products outside the usual retail storefronts or industrial areas.

You don't have to develop a new building to help grow these entrepreneurs. The key is to recognize your existing assets and connect them. Why not start with a party? Ask each Board member to think of some friends or neighbors who sell something. Brainstorm a list at a Board meeting. Bring these people together with your Board at an informal gathering appropriate to your community (A barbeque? A happy hour? A breakfast?)

Then, watch and listen to the conversations. You'll hear opportunities to connect entrepreneurs with each other and with community assets. I bet some will discover that they can buy or sell to each other. Maybe a few could collaborate on a



*Ask the Good Groups Guru!
Got a question about how to handle a voluntary group, community, or network you're involved with? Luther K. Snow has helped over 25,000 people in hundreds of groups to get things done together for the common good.*

project, like creating a selling website or Facebook page. They might share tips on good business resources, or even identify promising business opportunities.

You might describe this as "an incubator without walls." From a small but simple start like this, you will be highlighting to your Board and your community the valuable resources available to us, if we work and grow together. You'll be showing appreciation for local entrepreneurs, and encouraging innovation. And most of all, your Board will feel more useful and ready to do more, including future fundraising.

Sometimes it's better not to start by wishing for money we don't have, but to focus instead on digging up the treasure buried in our own backyards. Give it a shot, and let us know how you progress.

Luther

Got a question for the Good Groups Guru? Write to me at guru@luthersnow.com

[Click here to go to the full website](#)

Free PDF: Handout on Asset-Based Approaches for Rural Communities

Part of a series from Consumers Energy



Luther Snow:
Strategies for
Rural and
Small Town
Development:
Consumers
Energy Series

Our friends at Consumer's Energy in rural Michigan have put together a nice series of handouts on economic development, especially targeted to leaders of small towns and rural communities.

Their series on Strategies for Sustainable Rural and Small Town Development features handouts from top rural development experts, including Ernesto Sirolli, Milan Wall, Christine Hamilton-Purnell, Jack Schultz, Oscar Rodriguez, and yours truly.

To download the PDF, go [here](#), and click on the link where it says Download the free handout. You'll see the whole series there, so you can download the one I wrote, and any others you see that look interesting!

Glossary: Business Incubator

Named after the incubators that keep poultry eggs warm for hatching, a traditional business incubator is a building or space specially designed and managed to support new or emerging businesses. By gathering these businesses in one larger place, incubators are meant to reduce overhead and space costs.

Incubators also often involve the provision of centralized services for entrepreneurs, ranging from office services to warehousing to marketing. An "incubator-without-walls" is a program that provides some of those collective services and functions even without a common space or building.

Today's Lutherism

"Use what you've got, to get what you want."

Want to exchange links?

Strengthen our network and promote your site, newsletter, or blog



Strengthen our network

I think you and I are part of a larger, emerging movement of people who care about the common good and want to work with others to get things done for the better.

So if you have a website, or email newsletter, or blog, or ning, or whatever, let's exchange links. I'll post yours on the [Networking](#) section of my website, and I will periodically feature links in this newsletter.

Send me a message describing your site and how you will link back, to info@luthersnow.com

I'd also welcome a connection with you on Facebook , LinkedIn , or Twitter . Just click the link.

Thank you, and keep up the good work!

Yours truly
Luther K. Snow